
JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All broadcasters gave extensive top play to reports that an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 hit Fukushima at around 6 a.m. this morning, saying that the Japan Meteorological Agency has issued a tsunami warning for the coastal areas of Fukushima. The networks said tsunami as high as 3 meters could hit Fukushima.

Main front-page stories in national dailies included Russian President Putin's press remarks in Peru on Sunday about his recent summit with Prime Minister Abe, the South Korean opposition camp's moves to impeach scandal-hit President Park, and the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee's estimated budget for the construction of sports facilities and for security measures.



INTERNATIONAL

Putin emphasizes that Russia's priority is to seek economic assistance from Japan

All papers reported extensively on Monday's press conference in Lima by Russian President Putin, who disclosed that in his meeting with Prime Minister Abe in the Peruvian capital a few days earlier, they discussed the idea of conducting "joint economic activities" on the Russian-held Northern Territories off Hokkaido. Since the Russian leader repeatedly emphasized the importance of promoting bilateral economic cooperation both at the press conference and his summit with Abe, Japanese officials have apparently become less optimistic about the prospects for major progress in the Northern Territories negotiations when Putin visits Japan next month.

Mainichi said the Japanese side is displeased that the Russian president unilaterally disclosed to the press the details of his one-on-one summit with Abe. However, Yomiuri claimed that the GOJ is inclined to accept Putin's proposal on "joint economic activities" on the condition that they can be implemented in a manner that does not recognize Russian sovereignty over the four contested islands. Although the GOJ had been extremely hesitant about such an idea for many years, the Abe administration has now chosen to explore the possibility based on the "new approach" that the two leaders adopted in May this year to pursue a bilateral peace treaty. According to Yomiuri, Tokyo is hoping to seal agreements with Moscow on the "joint economic activities" and visa- and passport-free travel to the islands by selected Japanese when Abe meets with President Putin in Japan in mid-December.

Yomiuri also noted that the GOJ is willing to prioritize economic cooperation to build confidence with Russia based on the assessment that no progress can be expected on territorial negotiations if Japan simply insists on its claims. As a result, the papers predicted that a major breakthrough in the territorial talks during Putin's upcoming trip to Japan is highly unlikely. Instead, the GOJ is looking to seal an accord on resolving the dispute in several years with a return date possibly being set "50 years after the conclusion of a peace treaty."

Japan, Russia to launch fund to promote investment in medicine, urban development

Nikkei front-paged a GOJ plan to assist the Japan Bank for International Cooperation in launching a joint fund worth 100 billion yen with the Russian Direct Investment Fund to encourage Japanese commercial enterprises to invest in such sectors as medicine and urban development in Russia. Tokyo is reportedly hoping this "powerful" economic incentive will help elicit Russian concessions on the territorial dispute.

Poll shows Japanese relatively negative about election of Trump

Asahi published the results of its latest public opinion survey that showed about 44% said the election of Trump as U.S. president was "not good," while 20% said otherwise. Although almost half

predicted U.S.-Japan relations will remain unchanged under the Trump administration, 22% said they will head in the wrong direction. Only 9% were optimistic about the prospects of the trans-Pacific ties. However, some 77% gave a positive appraisal of Prime Minister Abe's recent meeting with the President-elect.

ROK, Japan to give cabinet endorsement today to pact on security of military information

Yomiuri wrote that the governments of Japan and South Korea both plan to approve today a bilateral general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) for signing tomorrow in Seoul.

Embattled President Park apparently chose to go ahead with the controversial pact with Tokyo that has drawn strong criticism from the opposition bloc based on the judgment that closer security cooperation with Tokyo through enhanced sharing of military intelligence is indispensable for dealing with North Korea's continued nuclear and missile provocations.

Abe speaks briefly with Chinese leader at APEC summit

Several papers wrote that PM Abe spoke briefly with Chinese President Xi on Sunday on the margins of the APEC summit in Lima. They agreed to make mutual efforts to improve bilateral relations because next year will mark the 45th anniversary of diplomatic normalization. In response to Abe's comment expressing hope to build a stable and friendly relationship, the Chinese leader said: "I feel encouraged by your remark. It is important to improve relations by properly addressing outstanding issues and creating a friendly atmosphere between the people of our countries."

SECURITY

Okinawa leader calls for environmental assessment at helipads in NTA

Mainichi and Tokyo Shimbun reported on a meeting held yesterday in Tokyo between Okinawa Governor Onaga and Defense Minister Inada, during which the governor asked that the ministry conduct an environmental assessment at the helipads under construction in the Northern Training Area based on the assumption that the Futenma-based Ospreys will use them. Inada did not give a definite response to his request.

Former defense minister claims Japanese don't really appreciate U.S. military

Mainichi took up remarks made yesterday at a symposium by former Defense Minister Nakatani on President-elect Trump's repeated calls for Japan to pay more for the stationing of U.S. troops in Japan "I wonder how interested Japanese people are in the U.S. presence," he said. "I think their gratitude is very shallow. Mr. Trump has become aware of these sentiments and is saying that the Japanese should be more appreciative and pay more for the U.S. to continue to defend Japan."

Prefectural governors discuss base-hosting burden on Okinawa

Tokyo Shimbun reported that the National Governors' Association on Monday convened the first meeting of a recently-launched study group aiming to reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa. A total of 11 prefectural leaders, including Okinawa Governor Onaga, attended the meeting. The Okinawa leader called for national debate on the disproportionate security burden borne by Okinawa. He asserted that U.S. military bases are the "highest hurdle" to the development of the island economy.

Majority opposed to "rush to the rescue" operations by SDF

Asahi front-paged the results of its latest public opinion poll showing that some 56% expressed opposition to the GOJ's decision to allow SDF personnel in South Sudan to undertake "rush to the rescue" operations, while 28% were in favor of it.

ECONOMY

Abe wary of possible bilateral dialogue between U.S., China

In an article on the conclusion of the APEC leaders' meeting in Peru, Asahi said Japan is alarmed by the possibility that the incoming Trump administration may choose to hold bilateral economic dialogue with China. The paper quoted an unnamed Abe cabinet minister as saying: "What we should be concerned about is unilateralism and bilateralism by Mr. Trump." The daily said given that Trump apparently fails to recognize the importance of the TPP, he may choose to view China as an equal economic partner and try to establish a grouping in the Asia-Pacific region with Beijing if he judges that doing so would serve U.S. interests. An unnamed MOFA official underscored the need for Japan to carry out intense lobbying so that Trump can fully understand the value of the U.S.-Japan alliance, adding that China will become even more emboldened in the region if Washington holds bilateral dialogue with Beijing.

POLITICS

Opposition lawmakers to launch group to promote casino legislation

Yomiuri wrote that some Democratic Party politicians plan to launch a study group soon on legislation to legalize gambling with the goal of pressing the party leadership to become more positive about starting Diet deliberations on a casino bill that has already been submitted to the parliament by the LDP and the Japan Innovation Party.

